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NIO # 730-74

12 April 1974

DDI-1111-74

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable James R. Schlesinger
Secretary of Defense

SUBJECT : Outcomes of Hypothetical US-Soviet
Naval Engagements During the 1973
Middle East Crisis

1. The attached study was prepared in response to your request for an assessment of the probable outcomes of a US-Soviet naval battle during the recent Middle East crisis, had such a battle occurred.
2. My colleagues' analysis is perforce hypothetical. It is constrained by certain clearly stated assumptions, e.g., that any such engagement would have remained localized, would have stayed non-nuclear, and would not have been part of or allowed to precipitate a wider general war. Such assumptions are necessary to create a manageable analytical problem, since without them it would have been virtually impossible to consider a Mediterranean naval conflict in the abstract and not as but one component of a much larger and more complex struggle, with many of the larger war's aspects having a material bearing on that Mediterranean naval struggle's outcome. These conceptual constraints, though necessary to keep the problem manageable, are patently arbitrary and, in my opinion, quite artificial. I find it difficult to envisage even three days of intense US-USSR naval combat (even non-nuclear combat) in the Mediterranean not being part of a general war or precipitating a general war, hence I find it hard to envisage any extensive set-to between the US Sixth Fleet and the Soviet Mediterranean Squadron as being a kind of floating Fashoda (remembering that the impact and consequences of Fashoda would have been quite different had any shots actually been fired).
3. The attached study (per your wishes) was prepared quietly within the Agency and not coordinated with anyone else. Indeed, to my knowledge, no one outside the Agency is aware that we have done it. It is for your eyes alone and we plan no further distribution.

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George A. Carver, Jr.

Deputy for National Intelligence Officers

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Attachment

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MEMORANDUM FOR: The Secretary of Defense

SUBJECT : Outcomes of Hypothetical US-Soviet
Naval Engagements During the 1973
Middle East Crisis

The attached study was prepared in response to your request for an evaluation of the probable outcome of a US-Soviet naval battle during the recent Middle East crisis.

.....
This memorandum was prepared in the Office of Strategic Research. Comments and queries may be addressed to Mr. [] Code []

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8 April 1974

Outcomes of Hypothetical US-Soviet
Naval Engagements During the 1973 Middle East Crisis

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Introduction

This paper examines the likely results of hypothetical engagements between US and Soviet naval forces in the Mediterranean during the Middle East Crisis of 1973. The body of the paper describes the buildup of the opposing forces through the end of October when the concentration of Soviet naval units was greatest and assesses the probable outcome of an engagement on 1 November. This interaction is examined against a background of the political and doctrinal considerations that constrained the military actions of both sides. The Annex to this paper describes a more likely exchange--one occurring on 26 October 1973 at the peak period of tension following the threatened Soviet Middle East intervention and the US military alert.

The conclusions of the study are general--a consequence of the various assumptions necessary to reduce a complex, hypothetical conflict to a workable model. The paper's supporting judgments are not based on an elaborate war game, but on an assessment of the major strengths and weaknesses of the opposing forces.

For the purposes of this paper, the "winning" naval force is loosely defined as that which has the preponderant offensive capability upon termination of the conflict.

Summary of Key Judgments

In a hypothetical engagement between conventionally armed US and Soviet naval forces in the Mediterranean Sea on 1 November 1973, the balance of offensive naval weapons systems would have been so close that the side which initiated a carefully pre-planned and coordinated conflict would probably have won the initial exchange (pages 11 and 12).

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Messrs. Proctor/Walsh *Earl* *10/10/74*
J. L. McKeen

This memo from the NIOs (drafted by OSR) was prepared only for the Secretary of Defense (at his request). You may want to look at the "conclusions" at paper clip.



15 Apr 74
(DATE)

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